

5 [ENTHUSIASM]

# MARTIN SATRIO

**College Degree Program:** Meteorology, Math

**Study Abroad Program:** Australia



*Posing in front of Loch Ard Gorge during the Great Ocean Road trip.*

Growing up, I always had great enthusiasm to travel and see new places. Every summer, my family and I would journey to a new place we had not seen before, most of the time by road trip so we could experience more along the way. Going on these trips, traveling to different cities, and exploring many national parks constitutes many of my fondest childhood memories. My parents knew the value of traveling as well as the joy and excitement it can bring. Because of this, I knew that while attending the University of Oklahoma, I wanted to study abroad.

Fortunately, OU prides itself on making multitudes of study abroad opportunities available to students. Through the School of Meteorology's Exchange Program, I had the choice of studying abroad in England, Germany or Australia. Though the exchange program typically takes place during the spring semester of junior year, I had my eyes set on Australia from day one of my freshman year. The "land down under" full of kangaroos, koalas and poisonous reptiles? Sign me up.

While I was undoubtedly excited to fly all the way to the other side of the world and begin my

semester-long journey, I was also nervous about venturing into an unfamiliar place. I had never traveled far on my own and definitely not to the other side of the world. I also wanted to share this experience with someone special to me. I eventually convinced my long-time girlfriend Claire to experience this journey with me, and though she was hesitant at first, she quickly became eager to explore Australia as well.

The day finally came to begin my 24-hour flight to Australia. The whole way there, questions raced through my mind: Would I make new friends there? Would I have enough time outside of school to travel? Would I get homesick? When I finally landed and got to the university after an exhausting trip, many of my fears eased. Several others staying in my dormitory were also exchange or international students. I quickly made a group of friends who lived in my hall, some of them local to Australia and some from other countries. They talked about life in their home countries compared to life in Australia, and I shared my own stories about what life in America was like. From that moment on, enthusiasm about the next few months took over.

*Skyline of Melbourne during the evening from the Melbourne Star observation wheel.*





Kangaroo-min

During the first few nights in Australia, Claire and I, along with new friends we made, took to the streets of Melbourne to explore the city and see what it had to offer. We shopped around, walked through historic areas and went out for a couple of drinks when the sun went down. It was a beautiful city and it all seemed so surreal.

We then decided that we wanted to explore outside of Melbourne, and we heard of a guided trip to Sydney that was happening the first weekend of school. Though we were uncertain about it since it would require us to miss classes, we decided to just go for it since a trip to Sydney does not come around every day. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We explored the Sydney Harbor Bridge and the iconic Opera House, and even took a nighttime boat ride in the Sydney Harbor. The city was beautiful and unforgettable.

After Sydney, I decided that we would take as many trips and explore as many places as possible. Besides, I did not fly halfway around the world just to sit in class and study for tests. Over the next few months, I went to places

such as the Grampians National Park, where I got to pet wild kangaroos; the Great Ocean Road, which was filled with stunning blue ocean views; and Phillip Island, where I fed pelicans, body boarded down steep sand dunes and saw cute penguins. I took short day trips with friends to Fort Nepean, a historic fort at the very southern end of Melbourne; St. Kilda, where I rode rollercoasters and saw more penguins; and Torquay Beach, where I successfully learned to surf. With my meteorology class, I even drove to Lake Eildon for a weekend camping trip to experience the wildlife and conduct field experiments.

During spring break, Claire and I flew out to Indonesia, where my parents grew up. We spent a few days in beautiful Bali and a few days in the island of Java, experiencing and learning a completely new culture of Indonesian life. Lastly, and perhaps the pinnacle of it all, was my trip to the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef: Cairns, Australia. There I scouted the tropical rainforests, held a koala for the first time, and of course, snorkeled in the Great Barrier Reef with its plethora of aquatic life. It is impossible

to describe in a short story all of the incredible experiences that I had through all my trips. Whether the experiences were with Claire, friends I made upon arriving or people I had just met, all of it was unforgettable.

Looking back at all of it now, the experience seems more than surreal. The amazing things I saw, did and experienced were beyond what I imagined before going to Australia. My enthusiasm motivated me to study abroad. It

pushed me to see and travel to as many places as possible while I was there, and to experience those sights with old and new friends. Everyone expects to hold a koala and see kangaroos in Australia, but not everyone expects to camp out in the wilderness or boogie board down sand dunes. Keeping an open mind and being excited about all of it allowed me to enjoy Australia to its fullest, and I hope that I can experience it all again someday.

*Claire and I on the Sydney Harbor with the Sydney Opera House in the background.*

